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ABSTRACT

This document reports briefly on a meeting sponsored by the National Association of State Boards of Education and attended by state-level policy-makers from nine states deeply involved in desegregation efforts. Topics discussed by the participants in relation to desegregation efforts included funding, judicial and legislative commitment, state board authority, urban desegregation, postdesegregation needs, technical assistance, personnel, and community education. The report concludes with sixteen recommendations for state desegregation policy. (PGD)

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DESEGREGATION:

PROBLEMS, SUCCESSES, AND NEXT STEPS

The View of Selected Chiefs and State Board Members

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State boards influence the educational directions in the state. State boards do not act alone: they interact with the chief state school officer, the legislature, the governor, local constituents, and state level associations of administrators, teachers and school boards. Through their state level policy development and adoption process, and by virtue of their relationship with the state legislatures, state boards determine the tone, direction and quality of education in their states.

Created in 1959 with an initial membership of eleven states, the National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE) now has a membership composed of the state boards of education in 46 states, the District of Columbia, and four U.S. territories. It is a dynamic and effective Association representing these state boards of education as they seek to promote quality education in the states and to strengthen the tradition of lay control of American public education.

DESEGREGATION:

PROBLEMS, SUCCESSES, AND NEXT STEPS

The View of Selected Chiefs and State Board Members

Presented to the:

NATIONAL TASK FORCE ON DESEGREGATION STRATEGIES

November 16, 1978
New Orleans, Louisiana

By the:
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF
STATE BOARDS OF EDUCATION
Suite 526, Hall of the States
444 North Capitol St., N.W.
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INTRODUCTION

On November 6, 1978, members of state boards of education and designees of the chief state school officers of nine states met in Chicago, Illinois to discuss the status of school desegregation and integration, and to analyze and make recommendations about the state role in promoting effective integrated education for the nation's public school children. The meeting was convened by the National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE) for the National Project and Task Force on Desegregation Strategies (sponsored by NASBE, the Education Commission of the States, and the Council of Chief State School Officers).

Attending the meeting were state-level policy makers from the nine invited states: California, Delaware, Illinois, Ohio, Massachusetts, Michigan, New Jersey, New York, and Wisconsin. These particular states were asked to participate in the meeting because of the relatively high level of desegregation activity occurring there. A representative from the Education Commission of the States came to observe the meeting, and a noted expert in desegregation, Dr. Meyer Weinberg--professor at the University of Massachusetts, author, and editor of "Integrated Education"--provided the participants with in-depth knowledge of the issues and a national perspective. (The attendance list is attached as Appendix I.)

Dr. Weinberg opened the meeting with a survey of significant, recent desegregation activity occurring around the country. The state level representatives then shared with each other the major desegregation problems, controversies, successes, and activities taking place in their states. After lunch, the participants divided into three smaller groups to discuss and arrive at a consensus on what the major desegregation issues are, why each one is a problem, what action is needed to ameliorate the problems, and, finally, who should be responsible for taking such action. The entire group then discussed the role which state boards of education, state departments of education, and state legislatures should be playing in promoting effective integrated education. (A copy of the agenda is included as Appendix II).

PROBLEMS/SOLUTIONS

A long list of needs and problems with desegregation efforts poured forth from the state officials, indicating there is a long way to go before integrated education in America becomes a reality. Nonetheless, several of the participating states had limited to highly successful desegregation experiences to report, and were able to identify specific policies or actions which were instrumental to the

success. In one sense, the myriad and complex problems delineated by the participants could all be reduced to one word: commitment. When commitment to integration exists on the part of the public, the federal government, state legislatures, the state education establishment, and local school districts, solutions to all the apparent barriers can be found. Closely connected to the problem of commitment is the problem of funding.

Funding

While all participants agreed that money alone cannot solve the problems of a segregated society, lack of adequate funding, and in some cases, use of funds in inefficient and ineffective ways, frustrates the desegregation effort at every turn. Funds are needed for planning, for recruiting minorities to fill staff positions, for monitoring, for technical assistance to locals, for transportation costs. Discretionary monies in particular are needed for implementing desegregation plans. Categorical funds--which are threatened in California, for instance--are important for implementing integrated education programs after desegregation has been achieved.

In Milwaukee, Wisconsin, the fiscal incentive established for interdistrict transfer--$2300 for each child brought into the district--is regarded as an extremely workable and effective solution. The state officials feel the increased funding should be coming from federal, state, and local sources. Funds are not appropriated, they say, because legislative commitment to desegregation is lacking. In addition to the resistance of legislatures, the participants also pointed to resistance of the taxpayers and general economic restraints.

Judicial/Legislative Commitment

The need for legislation to give rule-making authority to state boards of education, and the need for the courts to back up that authority, was emphasized by a majority of those attending the meeting. In some cases, laws and school board regulations conflict and cancel each other out. Some courts rule in favor of limited, ineffective desegregation plans, and absolve authorities because there is no evidence of intent to segregate. Other courts ask districts to justify the gaps in their limited plans. Sometimes, anti-busing legislatures strike down desegregation initiatives taken by a state board.

The state leaders also objected to inconsistent decisions by the federal judiciary, and felt these judges ought to be more helpful and committed to desegregation. Representatives from Delaware added that fortunately the last judge in their case took an interest in what happened in the classroom after the "numbers" had been redistributed. In that state, the judge ordered the hiring of additional staff specialists in reading, guidance counseling, and human relations.

State Board Authority

In addition to lacking mandates, state boards of education were also seen as failing to assert and enforce their authority. The lack of a definitive state role fosters an inability to exert leadership. Some state board members expressed regret at their deference toward local automony where desegregation issues are concerned. In California, under new and severe financial constraints brought about by the passage of Proposition 13, the state is increasingly deferring to local school districts to take desegregation initiatives and to set budgetary priorities.

Questions of enforcement focused on whether or not the state should withhold funds from recalcitrant districts. The representatives from New Jersey said it was their state's considered judgment that funds should not be withheld, but rather the state should show cause and order a plan for desegregation. In that state, the Robinson-Cahill decision requires the state to monitor local school districts. The districts must comply with state board rules for racial balance, materials, certification, and inservice training, among others. By 1980, all local districts will be rated either approved, conditionally approved, or disapproved. Frequent monitoring was identified as essential to the successes achieved so far in desegregating New Jersey schools. The need to establish grievance procedures with regard to busing was also discussed.

Metropolitanism

Most of the participating states believe that interdistrict desegregation is a necessary evil, like busing, and that states ought to be empowered to redistrict and/or to consolidate districts. New York and Delaware laws prohibit interdistrict transfer of students without the consent of the districts involved. Lack of mandates are not the only force that inhibits redistricting initiatives by the state; other influencing factors are lack of funds, sensitivity to local control, regionalism, and negative public opinion.

Urban decay is seen by some states, especially Ohio, as the major impediment to successful school desegregation. A massive commitment to reducing the unemployment and dropout rates is the first step. One state board member described the "action needed" as "nothing short of a Marshall Plan for the cities." In some cases, enforcing desegregation is leading to increased segregation. Resegregation problems such as white flight are a major concern. "White flutter," or a testy, wait-and-see attitude, has been observed by California officials.

Urban school district desegregation can create coordination problems when the state education agency infringes upon jurisdictions

of other agencies; interagency review and the establishment of a statewide oversight agency are possible remedies. In Springfield, Illinois, coordination at the front end paid off in a plan developed jointly by the State Board of Education, State Department of Education, and the city; no court order was involved. Desegregation occurred without incident, and reading scores are up. This plan called for mandatory redistricting combined with a voluntary magnet school plan, both of which were deemed essential to success. The magnets have clear educational themes, thus raising issues of quality. This has had a positive effect upon staff morale, and upon the public image of the schools.

On the negative side of the urban desegregation issue, the Wilmington, Delaware, redistricting plan has led to a teacher strike now affecting eleven districts; urban teacher salaries are higher than suburban, and the latter want equalization within one year. State officials fear racial tensions when the teachers return to the classrooms.

Integration

State leaders all identified post-desegregation needs as top priorities. After students and staff are reassigned, much needs to be done to provide for quality integrated education. Many of the needs and problems are complex, controversial, and costly. Quality control mechanisms--such as ability grouping, competency based testing, remediation, inservice training and new certification requirements for multicultural education--need to be established and effectively implemented.

There are concerns about programmatic resegregation in special education, and about the potential for using the basic skills movement as a resegregation tool. Strong support was expressed for the early administration of quality remediation programs. Multicultural education needs to be infused into curriculum and materials. Problems of discipline and classroom segregation call for strong and equitable policies. Again, funding must be made available to meet these needs, and technical assistance as well.

Technical Assistance

State officials characterize the technical assistance provided to local school districts as generally too little and too late. There is a lack of money and of trained, knowledgable people. In addition to meeting integration goals, locals need technical assistance in their desegregation efforts, and in gaining the confidence and support of the public. Funding should be made available from a combination of state,

local, and federal sources, but in addition, more effective use could be made of community volunteers.

Personnel

Multicultural education training is needed for teachers, administrators and support staff affecting the instructional environment. State leaders were in agreement that competencies in this area should be required by the state through inservice training and preservice certification requirements. Whether or not multicultural education should become a recertification requirement is a controversial issue, and a "solution" that most participants had strong reservations about. Teachers' unions strongly object; advocates assert that teachers feel inundated with inservice training demands and that the importance of multicultural education must be reflected in teacher certification requirements.

It was pointed out that principals need training for new programs and a new role. Also, more minorities ought to be recruited into the educational establishment. Massachusetts officials identified personnel as a major reason why tensions have relaxed in Boston: new membership on school committees, a new superintendent who is personally and publicly committed to integration, more active parent councils, and the unwillingness of the public to re-elect anti-integrationists.

Community Education

The need for public support for desegregation/integration efforts is regarded as crucial to success. Currently, there is lack of support from parents, politicians, the church, and business. Participants explained that communities lack information, that the public often will not support needed law suits, that the needs assessment programs in the schools are poor. Clear state policies for community education should be adopted. Adequate research and development into the impact of desegregation on the community is lacking, and more technical assistance to communities is needed.

The representative from California said mandated parent involvement in desegregation plans there has been critical for success. Community planning councils are an important part of the successful Milwaukee, Wisconsin desegregation plan. Almost 700 students were bused last year, almost 300 more will be transferred this year, yet opposition or "white flight" has been minimal. The planning councils that each local district must establish are seen as effective mechanisms for community involvement in and satisfaction with the desegregation program.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The state legislature should pass laws clearly and specifically prohibiting discrimination, racial isolation, and other segregating conditions.

- Where authority does not exist, the state legislature should act to assign authority to the appropriate state agency.

- The state should publicly acknowledge segregation problems, should have clear policies and regulations for implementing desegregation laws, and should initiate the development of desegregation action plans.

- The state should assume responsibility for the means of implementing desegregation action plans, and should recognize the cost of equal quality education--including programs, personnel training, and busing.

- The state legislature should provide fiscal incentives to local school districts so they can properly implement desegregation plans.

- The state board of education and state department of education should be properly staffed so desegregation laws and integration programs can be effectively implemented.

- The state should provide a variety of technical services to state and local agencies in the area of desegregation.

- The state should establish a mechanism to periodically review all state policies related to desegregation, including equal educational opportunities and employment.

- The state board of education should monitor and require reports on desegregation programs administered by the state education agency.

- The state education agency should have coordinating authority over all programs--federal and state--that impact on segregation in the state.

- States should recognize the particular needs of urban areas.

- Ethnic segregation should be viewed by the state as a separate problem needing special effort.

- The linkage between state policy makers and state education agency administrators should be strengthened.

- State staffing patterns should reflect a high priority placed on desegregation efforts and affirmative action plans.

- The states should articulate the priorities for research into desegregation efforts and integrated education; efforts should be made to identify the negative imagery and the successes.

- The states should develop a policy regarding instructionally effective minority schools and whether or not these should be exempt from desegregation efforts.

APPENDIX I

Meeting Attendance List

National Project and Task Force on Desegregation Strategies

November 6, 1978

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APPENDIX II

National Project on Desegregation Strategies
Agenda
November 6, 1978
Chicago, Illinois

9:00 - 9:30	Introduction Phyllis Blaunstein, NASBE - Room 386
9:30 - 10:00	Overview Myer Weinberg, University of Massachusetts
10:15 - 12:15	Discussion What are the major issues?
12:15 - 1:15	Lunch
1:15 - 2:30	Small Groups - Salon 2 What are the problems? What are the solutions?
2:30 - 4:00	Discussion Define state role